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ECONOMICS  
SEMINAR

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**DR. BOARDMAN'S SERMON**

**ON THE**

**BURLINGTON CATASTROPHE.**

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GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN ACCIDENTS.

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ECONOMICS  
SEMINAR

# A S E R M O N

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATHS OF THE

REV. JOHN MARTIN CONNELL, MR. JOHN FIELD  
GILLESPIE, AND MRS. SUSAN GILLESPIE,

Three of the Victims of the Railroad Catastrophe at Burlington,  
New Jersey, on the 29th day of August, 1855.

BY

HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D. D.

PHILADELPHIA:  
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## CORRESPONDENCE.

TO THE REV. H. A. BOARDMAN, D. D.

DEAR SIR: We respectfully solicit a copy of your appropriate and instructive sermon, delivered on the 23d inst., on the recent Burlington railroad disaster.

We believe that it will prove a useful, though mournful, medium of improvement to many friends and relatives, to look at that mysterious Providence in the religious aspect in which you so feelingly presented it.

We are, dear sir,

Yours, very sincerely,

WILLIAM FERRIDAY.  
DAVID P. WILLIAMS.  
ROBERT PERCY.  
HENRY L. BENNETT.  
JOHN C. RALSTON.  
ROBERT S. RALSTON.

PHILADELPHIA, *September 24, 1855.*

PHILADELPHIA, *September 25, 1855.*

REV. DR. BOARDMAN.

DEAR SIR: We beg leave to express to you our high appreciation of the able and eloquent discourse upon the recent fearful railroad catastrophe, pronounced by you on Sabbath afternoon. To us, personally, it has peculiar interest in the beautiful and truthful sketch it contains of the life and character of our lamented

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friend, the Rev. J. M. Connell; and to the community at large, it has great interest in its faithful improvement of those solemn lessons which the event is calculated to teach, alike for this world and for the world to come. It has seemed to us that its publication will be useful to the community; and, for ourselves, we shall rejoice to possess in more durable form a memorial of our departed friend.

If it be consistent with your feelings, we beg you to favor us with the manuscript with a view to its publication.

We are, with high respect,

Yours, very truly,

THEO. CUYLER.

WM. M. CLARK.

GEO. H. HART.

STEEN BILLE.

TORBEN BILLE.

RICH'D S. SMITH.

PHILADELPHIA, *September 27, 1855.*

GENTLEMEN: As the near relatives and very intimate friends of those whom it was the design of my late discourse to commemorate, I am gratified to know that this humble tribute to their memory has met with your approval. I feel that the manuscript properly belongs to you, and herewith place it in your hands.

With sincere sympathy in your affliction, I remain,

Most respectfully and truly,

Your friend and servant,

HENRY A. BOARDMAN.

MESSRS. WILLIAM FERRIDAY.

DAVID P. WILLIAMS.

THEODORE CUYLER.

WILLIAM M. CLARK.

And others.

## GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN ACCIDENTS.

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"HE COMETH FORTH LIKE A FLOWER, AND IS CUT DOWN: HE FLEETH ALSO AS A SHADOW, AND CONTINUETH NOT."—Job xiv. 2.

THE late railroad catastrophe at Burlington was, for two weeks after it occurred, the predominant topic of conversation in the two great cities immediately interested in that thoroughfare, and the theme of indignant and eloquent censure in the daily journals. Beyond this, neither community has seen fit to go in giving expression to the feelings awakened by this melancholy occurrence. A conflagration which lays a few squares of even a distant town or city in ashes, very properly summons our citizens together in general council, to manifest their sympathy with the sufferers and devise measures for their relief. The slaughter of more than a score of our friends and fellow-citizens, and the mutilating of some sixty or seventy more, in our very neighborhood, is not deemed an object of sufficient moment to call for a public meeting, whether to sympathize with the afflicted, or to endeavor to prevent the recurrence of

similar disasters. Whatever merit may attach to our vaunted civilization in other respects, it has yet to purge itself of one of the grossest elements of barbarism, an insensibility to the sacredness of human life.

And yet, by some happy inconsistency, a calamity like this is certain to elicit a great deal of sympathy. The loss of a gallant steamer a few months since, with its precious freight of human beings, was felt *for the moment* almost as a national affliction. And this railroad accident was followed by a general outburst of sympathetic feeling. Tens of thousands read the harrowing details with emotions which would not have discredited them, had their own relatives been among the sufferers. And as to Burlington, no eulogy can do justice to the hospitality and kindness of its inhabitants. Every door was thrown open, and every house ready to be made a hospital. Nothing was neglected which the best medical skill, faithful nursing, and the most tender and assiduous attentions, could do, to relieve the wounded, to solace the dying, and to comfort the bereaved. But whether this is to be *all*; whether this wholesale destruction of human life is to pass without any judicial investigation, or any legislative action which may reach the *causes* of these catastrophes, remains to be seen. The flagrant and criminal neglect with which the case of the *Arctic* was treated by the proper legal authorities, leaves little to be hoped for in the pre-



sent instance. We have attained the bad pre-eminence of doing less to protect the lives of travellers against incompetent and reckless carriers, than any other civilized nation. And it will not be surprising if the vivid impressions produced by this tragedy, should be as evanescent and inoperative as those occasioned by the numerous bloody and mournful scenes of a similar character which have preceded it.

But our concern with the subject to-day is of a different kind. We have come up to the sanctuary to pay an humble tribute of respect to the memories of some of the victims of this disaster. Many are the social circles which it has bereaved; many the households it has plunged into deep and poignant sorrow. Each of these twenty-four persons who have been hurried into eternity, was a centre of love and tenderness to some group of relatives. There were fathers upon whose care and industry large families were dependent for their daily bread; wives and mothers, happy in the wealth of conjugal and filial love which was lavished upon them, and as lavishly reciprocated; daughters reared with gentle care, and, up to that fatal moment, sheltered by parental fondness from every adverse blast; young men, standing upon the threshold of life, just equipped for its conflicts, and eager for its crowns; widows, who had already drank deep of the cup of sorrow, and proved the faithfulness of the widow's God; all these were commingled in this fearful slaughter; and not one of

them was stricken down, that the blow did not fall with a cruel severity upon a large circle of loving and lacerated hearts. If it were possible, I would speak to *all* these mourners, and bid them look to **HIM** who is both able and willing to comfort them. But they have their own sympathizing pastors and Christian friends, who will feel a sad pleasure in ministering to them the consolations of the gospel, and invoking for them the presence and support of the Holy Spirit, the only effectual COMFORTER.

I have a personal duty to perform as a pastor. Unused to preach funeral sermons, and deeming the custom, *as* a custom, of very questionable utility, there are occasions, nevertheless, which it would be both unfeeling and presumptuous to treat with silent indifference. And this is one of them. The bereavement we have experienced as a congregation, and the manner of it, alike demand that we should open our ears to the voice of this providence, and try to make some improvement of it. Nor need I speak of a single loss. That husband and wife whose remains you have, with many tears, laid side by side within the shadow of this sanctuary, though strangers to most of you, had their ties of fellowship with us, and claim the tribute of our remembrance.

But we are all conscious of a difficulty here. There has been so much of man's agency in bringing about these events, that we are prone to contemplate them only in that relation. The mind fastens with an in-

stinctive tenacity upon the cupidity, the self-confidence, the heedlessness, which precipitated this ill-fated train to its destruction; and, in the strong emotions which this view cannot fail to excite in every disinterested bosom, we are liable to forget that there was another and very different AGENT concerned in it. In other words, there are two distinct and, possibly, opposite aspects in which this, and every instance of violent death must be viewed; its aspect GOD-ward, and its aspect *man*-ward. The survey of it in either relation, to the neglect of the other, must lead to false and hurtful conclusions.

Of the two, the former aspect is much the more important. It is one of the fundamental and most precious truths of Scripture, that the providential government of God comprehends all creatures and all events. From the loftiest archangel before the throne to the invisible animalcule in a drop of water; from the extinction of a sphere to the fall of a sparrow; no creature but owns his sovereignty; no event but happens by his command or through his permission. Lest we might suppose that He did not concern himself about trivial things, He has distinctly taught us that his providence extends to the lilies of the field, the ravens, the quails, the locusts, and to the very hairs of our heads. Nor is His word less explicit in teaching that he is concerned in permitting, limiting, and overruling the reckless and the sinful actions of men. It were blasphemous to ascribe to him any

efficiency in producing these actions; but to withdraw them from his rule, would be an impeachment of his supremacy and a denial of his moral perfection. There are no greater crimes recorded in the history of the race than the sin of our first parents, and the betrayal and crucifixion of our Lord. And no one, who acknowledges the God of the Bible at all, will deny that the introduction of moral evil into the world, and the providing of a remedy for it, were comprehended in the Divine plan and controlled by his all-wise purposes.

That *death* is among the objects of his providence, is a necessary corollary from his sovereignty. It is one of his inalienable prerogatives to create life, and he alone can destroy it. "*I kill; and I make alive.*" Such is the concatenation of events, that the death of an obscure individual, or of an infant, at a different time or place from that which he had prescribed, might disorganize the entire scheme of terrestrial things, and even spread confusion through the whole boundless domain of his administration. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee: thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest: 'Return, ye children of men.'"

"The term of life is limited,  
Nor may a man prolong nor shorten it."

And this implies that the mode, and all the attending circumstances of death, are appointed in every instance. We may no more exempt one class of deaths from God's control, than another. The sword, the poison, the accident, are as much his instruments as the paralysis and the fever—the battle is no less his than the pestilence. The murder of Abel, and the tranquil death of Jacob; Joseph dying in Egypt, and Moses in Mount Nebo; Jonathan slain in battle, and David peacefully expiring in the bosom of his family; John the Baptist beheaded, and Stephen stoned to death; all have a common place in the great scheme of Providence.

What the precise agency is which He exerts in employing the depraved passions of men to execute his will, we need not now stop to inquire; the subject, indeed, is one which we can but imperfectly comprehend. Of this we are certain; that, while the ultimate results are his, the criminality by which they may be brought about, attaches exclusively to the instruments—who, it must be remembered, act with perfect freedom. (See Acts ii. 22, 23.) He was pleased to permit the slaughter of the children by Herod, the execution of the apostle James, the ten early persecutions, the butcheries of the Duke of Alva, and of bloody Mary, the horrible judicial murders of the Inquisition. Among the victims of these enormities were some hundreds of thousands of sincere Christians. We cannot doubt that His providence was as truly

concerned in the deaths of these believers, as it would have been had they all died in the ordinary course of nature. To let go this conviction, is to dethrone Jehovah, and to cut ourselves off from the only adequate source of *consolation* which we have under dispensations of this sort. The church sends forth her missionaries to the heathen, and presently she learns that her strong men have met a cruel and bloody death at the hands of the very tribes they went to instruct and save—Lyman and Munson in Borneo, Williams at Feejee, Lowrie in China. Is she to look only at second causes here? If she does, she cannot but murmur and rebel. But she knows that God's hand is in these afflictive events, as really as it was in the destruction of Job's property and children by the hurricane, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans; and she bows down in reverential awe, and cries with the patriarch, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

Nothing short of this conviction can reconcile us to the loss of relatives and friends who have been cut off, whether through the deliberate malice, or the culpable improvidence, of their fellow-creatures. There is neither comfort for survivors, nor peace for the dying, except as the sentiment can be brought home to the heart, that death is under the implicit and exclusive control of our Heavenly Father; and that it is just as impossible for one to die at any other time, or in any other manner, than those he has appointed, as it is

for a creature to come into existence without any exertion of His creative energy. It is a reflection replete with peace and hope to the child of God, that *all* his interests, even to the minutest, are in his Father's hands; that nothing can possibly happen to him except by his direction, or through his permission; that his life will be just as long, and will terminate just in that way, which God may deem to be for the best; and that all he has to do, is to decide questions of duty according to the light which may be afforded him at the time, and then go forward with the humble assurance, that his affairs will be ordered in infinite wisdom and mercy, and brought to those results which shall most conduce to the Divine glory, and to his own spiritual good.

It is not given him to foresee future events. He knows not which of the vessels that lie at the wharf are to cross the ocean in safety; but after due examination, he commits himself to one of them with the feeling, that if it be the will of God, he will be conveyed to his haven, and that whatever may happen, it will be just what an all-wise Providence may appoint. He knows nothing of the fate which may await this or that railroad train; but he does know that this same universal Providence presides over every road and every train, and over all its implements and movements; that if disaster come, even though it be through human recklessness, it must come by his permission; and that He can either preserve him in the midst of

peril, or prepare him for whatever may await him. I do not say that a Christian man will ordinarily be so imbued with these sentiments as to have no *anxiety* in taking his seat in a railroad carriage, or to be indifferent as to the issue of his journey. Enlightened piety is not of this romantic character, nor does it so blunt the sensibilities of men. But I do say, that this feeling of God's providential control over all the agents and all the contingencies of railway travelling, is a real sentiment in the breast of every true Christian; and that it is a source of unspeakable comfort, both to those who travel, and to the friends they leave at home. Nor is there anything else which can inspire an intelligent composure on this subject, in a country where this mode of travelling is attended with the appalling hazards which attach to it here.

These views link the fearful destruction of life on our railways, with the providence of God. He commissions death to fulfil his work in an endless variety of forms, and with all conceivable circumstances of tenderness or of horror. Rarely does it come in a form more terrible than this, with which we are becoming so familiar, or with a severity more indiscriminate. All ages, sexes, and conditions, are overwhelmed in a common ruin. Prepared or unprepared, the humble Christian and the obdurate unbeliever, are handed over to the same excruciating tortures, and the same speedy or lingering death. Happy they who are found with oil in their lamps, when the sudden



and startling cry breaks upon them: "*Behold the bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet Him!*"

And such consolation have that afflicted family whose bereavement is ours also, and whose sorrow we would, if possible, alleviate, by sharing it with them.

Among the passengers by the train of the 29th of August, was the Rev. JOHN MARTIN CONNELL, for several years past a member of this congregation, and one of our constant fellow-worshippers. I quote the following paragraph respecting his birth and training, from a brief obituary notice in the *Presbyterian*.

"He was the only child of John Connell, Esq., of Tusculum, near Wilmington, Delaware, and the grandson of the late Rev. Dr. Read, so extensively and favorably known as the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in the last named place. Very early in life the deceased made a profession of religion, which he ever adorned by a life consistent with its requirements. After having graduated at the University of Pennsylvania, he applied himself to the study of theology, and on completing the prescribed course in the Seminary at Princeton, was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of New Castle. In order to qualify himself more perfectly for that department of usefulness for which he thought himself best adapted, he continued his studies after leaving the Seminary, until he became a very finished scholar and accomplished writer. He devoted particular attention to moral science, and such were his attainments in this important branch of learning, that his name with those of others was laid before the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania as a candidate for the chair of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy recently vacated by the death of the lamented Professor Reed," and subsequently by the resignation of Professor Mercer.

The life of a retired student is ordinarily but little diversified by incident; and this concise paragraph touches upon most of the points appertaining to Mr.

Connell's professional biography. In devoting himself to a life of study and of teaching, he was swayed by a conviction, that this was "the department of usefulness to which he was best adapted." It was from no disparagement of the pastoral office, no want of zeal in the service of Christ, no love of ease nor secular ambition, but from a well-considered sense of the will of Providence, that he exchanged *for the time* the stated functions of the ministry, for a cognate sphere, separated from it rather by an imaginary than a real boundary. His determination received, it is believed, the unanimous approval of his friends; and all the more so when they found that his Christian character resisted the enervating influence so inseparable from literary pursuits, and under all circumstances retained its freshness and purity.

To assist you in forming some estimate of his worth, I avail myself of a letter kindly and spontaneously sent me a day or two since by one of his classmates and intimate friends, now a prominent and influential member of our Bar.

*September 19, 1855.*

MY DEAR SIR:—I am informed that you intend preaching a sermon with reference to the recent sad railroad catastrophe, and in it purpose to notice the character of my lamented friend, the Rev. J. Martin Connell. I rejoice greatly to hear that you are about paying this tribute to his memory. There are not many who could appreciate him. Quietness and gentleness, and unaffected diffidence, so veiled his finer gifts of mind and character from the common view, that few knew his worth, and fewer still his rich and varied mental endowments. I knew him with close intimacy from the

commencement of our college days, to the hour of his death, and I knew him always as a modest, faithful, earnest *seeker after truth*; and to this he steadily devoted a mind possessed of more than usual native power, excellently trained by an effective discipline, and richly stored with varied information.

The bent of his mind was always metaphysical, and I deem it high evidence of its healthiness and good discipline, that extensive and earnest study of metaphysics, especially among German writers, had left him with added strength and sincerity, and in the fullest sense, *an orthodox man*.

He belonged to a class which has few representatives among us; the class of quiet scholars, of men content to labor noiselessly, and yet faithfully, loving truth for its own sake, and finding their reward in its pursuit and acquisition; and yet not forgetting "that no man liveth to himself" alone, praying and waiting patiently for such opportunity to spread the truth, as God's providence might open to him.

Such a man, of course, had rare gifts for usefulness; and yet he was so unobtrusive, that time, and long time, would pass before his fitness would be known beyond that smaller circle of closer friendship and intimacy which gathered round him. He died just as he was beginning to be known. A few months before his death, he was a prominent candidate for the vacant chair of Moral Philosophy in our University. Had he been elected, he would have filled the chair, I have no doubt, with more than ordinary ability. He was laboring too with his pen, and a little time would in this way have brought him into notice. A mysterious Providence has cut him off suddenly, just as the life of quiet preparation seemed about to close, and he was about to enter full armed upon a path of wider usefulness. His death, though very sudden, found him quite prepared. It is soothing to recollect that high and earnest Christian hope, long ago and thoughtfully embraced, which filled his soul with peace in the hour of sudden death—away from home and friends, and surrounded by death in so many painful and distressing forms. It was no weak or doubting trust that sustained him in that solemn hour with so much of manliness and heroism of heart; for he was by nature more than usually timid and shrinking, and little fitted for rude struggles or the absence, in time of trial, of the gentler sympathies and kinder ministrations of home and friendship.

I cannot help thinking there is much in his life and character which may be usefully improved, and I only regret that the pressure of constant duties prevents me from giving you more fully, as I would wish to do, the impression close intimacy with him has left upon my mind.

With much respect, I am,

Sincerely yours.

This genial and discriminating sketch supersedes the necessity for any attempt at a formal portraiture of Mr. CONNELL on my part. I certainly have never known a man of greater modesty, or of greater gentleness of disposition. And yet beneath this almost feminine mildness and sweetness of character, there was an acute and vigorous intellect, a robust scholarship, and stores of learning which in the hands of most men would have been so used (and I will not say unfitly used) as to attract to their possessor the admiration of the multitude. He shunned the notoriety which others would have courted. It was only in communion with a very few chosen friends, that he brought out his treasures; and they were content to listen to him with the deference which men pay to an acknowledged superior, and the warm affection which it was impossible not to feel towards one whose radiant gifts derived their highest charm from the modest guise in which they were attired.

In this way it has come to pass that science and religion have met with a bereavement, the extent of which they can only learn now after the blow has fallen. However unprepared we may be for the an-

nouncement, it is painfully evident that a shining light has gone out in the midst of us. The grave has closed not only on an humble Christian, but upon an accomplished scholar and metaphysician, one whose pen, had he been spared, might perhaps have instructed the world, as much as his consistent example edified the social circle in which he moved.

But while his friends dwell with a mournful pleasure upon his gifts, it is his *piety* which affords them comfort in this season of trial. This was sincere, uniform, and consistent. He was singularly candid and ingenuous, "an Israelite without guile." Few persons of either sex live so long, without contracting more of the defilement of this sin-stricken world. It would be difficult to find a *purer* mind than Mr. Connell's. He carried his religion into every scheme and habit of his life. Questions of duty were resolved by the only true standard. He seemed never to forget that he "was not his own;" and however he may have shrunk from parading his endowments before his fellow-men, he wrote upon them, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," and laid them at the SAVIOUR'S feet.

The letter just quoted alludes delicately to his dependence upon "the gentler sympathies and kinder ministries of *home* and friendship." I fear to touch upon this subject, lest I may invade the sanctity of the fireside. And yet, this passing tribute to his memory would lack an essential feature, should I fail to speak of his filial piety. There are occasional in-

stances in which the bond of father and daughter, or of *mother and son*, clothes itself with a strength and a tenderness which seem scarcely to belong to a ruined world like ours. Such a bond, if I mistake not, has been sundered in this dispensation. *How* tender and how strong it was—how fond they were of each other's society—how essential to each other's happiness—it is not for me to say. He who created these ties, knows the anguish of having them severed, and He alone can soothe the lacerated hearts of these desolate parents.

“Desolate,” indeed, they must be!

A solitary light irradiated their beautiful home: and that light has gone out—nay, not “*gone* out;” it has been suddenly and harshly extinguished. This son was, in a sense, their *all*. And so endowed was he in mind, and heart, and manners, that he was son and daughter, friend and companion, confidant and counsellor, to them. The tenderness of their love towards him could not have been greater, had only five years instead of thirty-five rolled over his head; and yet there was blended with this intense affection, a sentiment of reverence. The reverence of a child for a parent meets us in every well-ordered family. The reciprocal sentiment is of rarer growth. It requires peculiar wisdom or signal goodness in the character of a child, to elicit it. But where these qualities happen to be combined in the same person, his parents can no more fail to reverence, than they can

cease to love, him. Thus it was with *these* parents and *their* son. They revered him, because they had seen his intellectual powers gradually maturing and expanding into a vigor and an amplitude, which commanded their homage. And they revered him still more, because they could never see him without feeling the sweet, mysterious power of his *goodness*, and knowing that, of a truth, the LORD was with him. Few parents have such a son to lose: none can have more reason to feel, on resigning a beloved child into the hands of God, that their loss is his eternal gain. A simple narrative of his death will best illustrate these points.

He left his home, at Wilmington, on Monday the 27th of August, with a view of going to the State of New York, to confer with the principal of an academical institution there. His excellent mother was pained at the thought of his going so far away to reside, and was deeply distressed in parting with him. This made such an impression upon his affectionate temper, that he spoke of it to a friend after reaching the city, and even wrote her a letter replete with encouragement and consolation. In this letter he begs his "*precious mother*" "to pray, and strive and not be cast down." He quotes the cheering promise, "They that trust in the Lord, shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever;" reminds her, that "God requires that we honor Him by putting our trust in Him;" and prays that "the God of

all comfort, may comfort her." He had intended to take the early (7 o'clock) line of Wednesday for New York. But changing his mind, he returned to Wilmington, quite unexpectedly to his parents, on the afternoon of the 28th, and spent the night at home. This brought him back to the city on Wednesday morning, just in time to take the *ten o'clock train*.

Of what ensued after the accident occurred, an account is given by a respected Methodist Clergyman, at Burlington, in a letter to his father.

"It is of the calm, peaceful, and triumphant death of your dear son, that I will write you. Of this, I have no doubt, you feel most deeply interested to know, and this alone is the balm to heal your wounded and sorrow-stricken heart.

"After the accident occurred, and immediately on the arrival of the car containing the wounded and dead, at the station-house in this city, your son attracted my attention. He was then able to sit up in his chair. On approaching him instantly, and inquiring of him with regard to the extent of his injuries and suffering, I found him perfectly conscious, calm, and in remarkable self-possession. He replied to my inquiries to the effect, that he had suffered greatly, but his trust was in God. At that moment, I was deeply impressed and affected with the superhuman character of his Christian fortitude. And I can never forget the calm, placid, and peaceful expression with which he looked around and surveyed the terrible scene with which he was surrounded. Never did he in health, I presume, sit in the midst of his friends, and in circumstances of safety, with more meekness and composure than he sat there; the sufferer, surrounded with the suffering, the dying, and the dead. And never, in the twenty-five years of my ministry, though often by the side of the afflicted and dying, have I seen so beautiful and impressive an example of the triumph of divine grace over the pains of suffering humanity.

"From the position he then occupied, he was soon removed to a comfortable mattress in an airy position, in the broad hall of the



residence of Mrs. Cary, near by the station-house. He was there surrounded by Christian friends, one of whom was an aged minister (Rev. T. Neal), of the M. E. Church. And the head of the gentle, meek, and patient sufferer, reclined in the arms of a Christian lady, an estimable member of the same church. Then it soon became evident that he could not long survive. The skill of the surgeons, and the kind offices of attending friends, could not retain him. God was about to call him to himself. Of this great truth our dear brother, though then dying, was perfectly conscious; nor was he in the least alarmed, but freely spoke of his approaching death, and assured his weeping Christian friends that all was well. He spoke tenderly and with deep affection of his dear parents; charged us to send his farewell to them, and assure them of his peace of mind in the trying hour, and his hope of meeting them in Heaven. Thus died your dear son, impressing all who witnessed his latest hour, with the great truth in which he had trusted and preached to others, the sufficiency of the Grace of God.

“And now, my dear sir, though deeply afflicted, allow me to commend you to the care of that Saviour whom your son loved, and to the consolation of that Gospel which your son preached, both of which were so eminently dear to him when heart and flesh were failing.”

An estimable gentleman of Burlington, belonging to the Society of Friends, states, in a letter to a friend, that while lying in a small cabin, previous to his removal to the hotel where he expired, he asked a lady, one of the wounded, whether she thought his hurt mortal. She replied: “God is merciful.” “Yes,” said he, “and I think (or I hope) He will be merciful to such a sinner as I am.” Afterwards, he was heard to say, “I am trying to put my trust in my Saviour.” An old gentleman sitting by him, remarked: “He is a sure trust;” to which he assented. About a half hour before his release, he said: “Tell my friends to

put their trust in the Saviour. Tell them not to delay. Tell them not to trifle." Then he spoke of his mother, calling her "*a precious jewel*;" and saying, in broken accents: "Oh, my MOTHER! my precious MOTHER! tell her I have hope—" This sentence was not finished. Soon after he bade them "farewell," and breathed his last. The letter proceeds: "His pious, cheerful, calm confidence in his faithful SAVIOUR, as the only name under Heaven by which we must be saved, deeply impressed the spectators, contrasted, as it was, with the ravings of some who were quite unfurnished for the world to come, and a portion of whom were far less badly hurt. He had a work to do for God in his dying hours. He adorned before many witnesses the doctrine of God, his Saviour. He illustrated the blessedness of being found watching. I trust that his 'precious mother,' though a sword has pierced her soul, can magnify Him who blessed her with such a son; who thus put honor upon him; and, in his prime, took him to himself."

Such was the end of MARTIN CONNELL. Rarely has so gentle a spirit ascended to Heaven from the midst of a scene of such confusion, carnage, and bitter anguish. But there was no turmoil *within*. He "knew in whom he had believed;" and his hope was now an anchor to his soul. Trusting in the merits of his Saviour, he could look death in the face, though coming in this appalling form, without alarm. The everlasting arms were underneath him, and he fell asleep

in Jesus as calmly and peacefully as he could have done had he been lying within his own cherished home and soothed by those fond "ministries" which had been the solace and joy of his life.

Let the praise be given where it is due. "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." It was "through the blood of the Lamb" he achieved this victory. His abounding grace wrought in him with such triumphant efficacy, that he was brought off more than conqueror over the last enemy. Having served Him in life, he now glorified God in his death; for such a death, as an attestation to the truth and value of the Christian's faith, is worth a thousand sermons. The throng of sympathizing friends and strangers who stood around him, and watched the lamp of life go out, felt its power. And, whether expressed or not, it was doubtless the feeling even of the most thoughtless among them: "A religion which produces fruit like this, must be Divine."

But there are others who claim a brief memorial at our hands. Among the passengers in this doomed train were JOHN FIELD GILLESPIE, Esq., and Mrs. SUSAN GILLESPIE, of Mississippi. Mr. Gillespie was a native of Tennessee. He went, while a young man, to reside in Louisiana; and, being there during the war of 1812, was engaged, as a member of a volunteer troop of cavalry, in the battle of New Orleans. He subsequently established himself in Adams County, Missis-

issippi, the place of Mrs. Gillespie's nativity. There they had lived ever since, amidst that community of opulent planters in the suburbs of Natchez, who are linked by so many commercial and domestic ties with almost every portion of the Union. Their home has often been described to me as a spot of surpassing beauty, where fruits and flowers, spreading vines and majestic forest-trees, shaded walks and verdant lawns, conspire to form a scene of Eden-like grace and luxuriance. Their mansion was the abode of true conjugal and parental affection. Happy in the society of their children, and children's children, and surrounded by their large family circle, nearly all of whom had estates near their own; there was far more in their lot than falls to the share of most persons, to make life pleasant and desirable. The hospitalities of their house were dispensed with a generous hand. Mr. Gillespie not only enjoyed the respect of all who knew him as a man of strict integrity and honorable feeling; but the soundness of his judgment and the kindness of his heart, made him the able and willing counsellor of the perplexed and the unfortunate. Many such have experienced the benefit of his judicious advice; and where more substantial aid was needed, they were not the persons to say, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled," without "*giving* the things which were needful to the body."

Little could they have imagined, on taking leave of that beautiful villa, and of all their children but one,

that it was to be a final adieu. And if the thought crossed the mind of a single relative they left behind, that some sad change might possibly intervene before they met again, who among them could have anticipated that neither parent was to return, that *both* the heads of this prosperous and happy family were to meet a sudden and cruel death. "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man, then, understand his own way?" They came to the North on their own lawful and befitting errand; but God had His purposes to accomplish also. And how different His ways from our ways, and His thoughts from our thoughts!

To return to the disaster at Burlington, Mr. Gillespie, like so many others of the passengers, was alarmed at the velocity with which the engineer was backing his train. He said to his wife, with evident emotion: "*We are moving at a fearful rate—faster than we went forward. What can be the matter?*"\* Feeling a slight jar, they instantly rose from their seat to make for the door, and, in another moment, were buried beneath the ruins of the train. Of the scene which fol-

\* It will not be deemed amiss to add, on this very important point, that a lovely and accomplished woman, who is among the slain, exclaimed simultaneously: "*What a fearfully rapid rate we are going at!*" "Yes," said her companion, that manly youth whose loss so many hearts deplore, "*they are all the while doing this on this road, and one of these days there will be some terrible accident.*" The words were scarcely out of his lips before the crash came.

lowed, one of the New York papers gave this graphic description :—

“The first car being driven backward, the second was thrown diagonally across the track, and its centre literally smashed into atoms by the concussion with the third. Both of these cars fell down the embankment, a height of about seven or eight feet. There were five cars torn to pieces. A more complete wreck was never witnessed. One of the cars was reduced to splinters; another was cut in twain, one end being reversed, and the other end in an upright position, frightfully shattered. The other cars were ripped from one end to the other and beyond repair. Some of the heavy iron axles were twisted into a bow. The heavy T rail was bent in some places and torn from its fastenings, the inside flanges being cut as if by a sharp axe.

“The scene which ensued baffles description. The cars piled upon each other, in shattered fragments, from beneath which myriads of human beings were crawling, maimed, broken, and reeking with blood like perspiration; the shrieks, groans, nay, absolute howlings of the wretched beings thus entombed, as it were, in destruction—mangled forms of men and women huddled together with broken panels, bars of iron, massive wheels, and scattered baggage—all combined to render this fearful scene even more terrible to the imagination. One of the passengers, Mr. George Ridgeway, jumped from the train, and the next instant was buried beneath it a lifeless, disfigured mass. Those persons who came to the rescue knew not where to begin the work of assistance from the urgent calls which arose on every side. The unhurt and the least injured were crawling up the banks, many of them being able to walk to the houses in the neighborhood, where they prayed for a glass of water—their sufferings being fearfully aggravated by thirst. On every side could be heard the sobs and wailings of those who had just recognized a dear friend or relative among the mangled and conglomerate mass. Wives for their husbands, husbands for their wives, parents for their children, all joined in swelling this vast aggregate of agony and horror.”

Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie, when extricated from the wreck, were found to be in a dreadfully mangled and

bloody condition, with serious internal as well as external injuries. A merciful Providence so ordered events, that the house to which they were conveyed, was that of a highly respectable Quaker lady,\* in the full import of the phrase, a *good Samaritan*. Here they were laid in separate rooms, the two parlors being given up to them. A large group of attached relatives were presently gathered around them; and nothing was omitted which the tenderest affection and the best professional skill could suggest, to avert a fatal result. But God had otherwise decreed. Mr. Gillespie had a limb amputated on Thursday, the day after the accident; and Mrs. Gillespie one on Friday; and the fortitude with which they each bore this painful operation, astonished even their experienced surgeons. His sufferings were intense; and he survived only till 2 o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday. They had no opportunity of seeing each other after reaching the house, nor was she apprised of his decease until the morning after it occurred. For two weeks longer, she lay stretched upon her bed of suffering, patiently awaiting the will of her Heavenly Father. There was no murmuring; no repining. She had for many years avouched the Lord Jehovah to be her God, and committed herself to Jesus Christ as her Saviour: and she was not forsaken in this her hour of trial. Her prevalent feeling throughout, was

\* MRS. MARGARET SMITH.

a deep and humbling sense of her own unworthiness, blended with adoring gratitude for the Divine goodness. On the very day after the amputation, she seemed scarcely able, as I conversed with her, to find words to express her views of "the *mercy* of God to such a sinner," as she felt herself to be. For a while, her vigorous constitution maintained the unequal struggle with her complicated injuries; and her friends were more than once cheered with the hope of her recovery. But nature was at last exhausted, and, on Friday, the 14th inst., she was released from her sufferings.

Thus have this husband and wife gone down to the grave. Long had they shared together the duties, the trials, and the enjoyments of conjugal life. It was a union founded on mutual esteem, cemented by experience, and nurtured by all those grave responsibilities and tender sympathies, which cluster around a large and attached household as the children grow up to maturity. In *our* wisdom, it might seem better, if this happy connection *must* be terminated, that one or the other of the parents should have been spared. But the moment we venture upon this ground, we must be overwhelmed with unbelieving doubts and misgivings. There is *very much* about a disaster like this, which mocks our wisdom. Why it should have been permitted at all; why so many precious lives should be sacrificed; why some of those who have perished, and who occupied spheres of pe-



culiar importance, should not have been restrained from going at that time; why the dying must submit to this dreadful baptism of blood, and be hurried away with so little time for preparation; questions such as these force themselves upon us and clamor for an answer. But who are we that we should presume to explore the secret purposes of the Deity, or resolve the mystery of his Providence? Are these things more inexplicable than the sin of Adam, the death of Abel, the flood, the long delay of the advent, the violent deaths of the Apostles, the limited diffusion of Christianity, and, in general, the sufferings and sorrows of the righteous? God's providential government of the world is an unfathomable abyss to our poor measuring-lines. To insist that everything shall be made plain to us now, is to insult Jehovah, and to invoke upon our souls the curse of judicial blindness.

“Man's science is the culture of his *heart*;  
And not to lose his plummet in the depths  
Of Nature, or the more profound of God:—  
*Either* to know, is an attempt that sets  
The wisest on a level with the fool.”

There is a very different point of view, already indicated, from which these calamities must be contemplated, if we would be reconciled to them. The Psalmist understood it: “I was dumb; I opened not my mouth; because *Thou did'st it.*” Here there *is* comfort, even for these sorrowing households. Let

them take hold upon His universal, all-pervading PROVIDENCE, and be at rest.

They need not, however, pause here. They have yet better consolation. That *faith in Jesus Christ* which carried these humble Christians in triumph through this scene of horrors, will no less sustain *you* under the burden of your great sorrow.

“Heaven gives us friends to bless the present scene ;  
Resumes them to prepare us for the next.”

Peradventure, this blow may have been sent in mercy, to bring you nearer to the cross, and to fasten your thoughts and hopes more firmly upon the things which are unseen and eternal. There you will find true peace and comfort. “In the world ye *shall* have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.” This is the Saviour’s language. Trust in Him, and he will teach you that most difficult of all lessons, entire resignation to the will of God. He will enable you to say, as He was strengthened to say, in circumstances of unutterable anguish, far transcending any, even the severest, trials he ever lays upon his people, “FATHER, NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS THOU WILT !”

A distinguished statesman\* connected with Mr. Connell, in writing to a member of the family on the subject of his death, observes, “*He* is in the land of the *living* ; it is you and I who are in the land of the

\* The Hon. HENRY A. WISE.

*dying.* Such a death is almost a 'translation'—it is so sudden, so swift, with so little suffering, so direct to heaven, that it is almost Elijah-like."—Certainly, the prophet could not have watched the approach of his chariot of fire with more serenity than this man of God looked forward to his departure. Others there were among that company of sufferers, who, as we are told, met death with similar composure. Here is a great lesson for the living. It is recorded of Addison, that, finding himself dying, he sent for his stepson, Lord Warwick, whose licentious habits he had long striven to reform, and said to him, "I have sent for you that you may see how a Christian can die!" Look at *this* spectacle, and "see how a Christian can die." "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

Sooner or later we must all encounter the last enemy. And whatever a proud philosophy or a self-righteous morality may suggest, if we would share in the triumph of these believers, it must be achieved with the same weapons. Men may die calmly under the influence of pride, of stupidity, of natural fortitude, of their own imaginary goodness. But there are two things which distinguish the experience of the dying Christian from that of all such examples as these, to wit: his views of God, and his views of himself. The Deity, as he contemplates Him, is a Being not only of infinite goodness, but of inflexible

*justice* and immaculate *holiness*, whose very nature binds him to abhor and punish all sin: and as to himself, he is deeply sensible of his own depravity and vileness. If these impressions are according to *truth*—if God be this holy and just Being, and man this depraved and sinful creature—then two things follow. Every experience which lacks these convictions, must be illusive; and there can be no intelligent and rational peace in death, except that which flows from trust in an *atonement* which has expiated sin and satisfied the requisitions of Divine justice. This foundation the *Christian* has. In Jesus Christ, he “beholds the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;” the Saviour, whose death “destroyed him that had the power of death,” and removed every obstruction to the full, free, and everlasting pardon of the penitent sinner. While bowed down, therefore, under his conscious ill-desert, and filled with contrition as he reviews his life, he cannot despair; for CHRIST has died. Trusting in His blood, he can anticipate death with composure, possibly with rapture, because he knows that its sting has been taken away, and that it comes as a messenger of mercy to conduct him to the skies.

Here is the secret of that heavenly tranquillity which lighted up the countenances of these Christians, even when overtaken by so sudden and so horrible a death. We claim for it that it is a *rational* peace, the only rational peace, as contrasted with the com-

posure which flows from any and all other sources. And we exhort you, by all the affecting considerations suggested by this dreadful calamity, to seek forgiveness and salvation, as they did, through the blood of the cross. Then, will *you* also be prepared to die the death of the righteous, and your last end will be like his.



## NOTE.

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IN the foregoing discourse, the late catastrophe has been contemplated only in its *religious* aspect. Here, if it were compatible with my sense of duty, I would gladly leave the subject. But something more is due, both to the dead and to the living; and in appending to the sermon, as it goes to the press, a few observations on the *other* aspect of this occurrence, its relations *man-ward*, I cannot feel that I am violating any of the proprieties of my office as a Christian minister—I certainly am but exercising the common right of a citizen.

To repeat a remark already made, human life is a sacred thing. There is no event in this world so solemn as the death of a human being; no responsibility so fearful as that of causing such an event. Practically, and in its connection with accidents by travel, our countrymen do not believe this. Railroad and steamboat companies, and their agents, treat it as a fantasy. Our legislatures and courts are asleep on the subject. Even the periodical press awakes to it only by paroxysms, when one of these terrific slaughters startles and appals the public conscience. Let every friend of humanity, then, however humble, exert his influence as occasion serves, to suppress this great, demoralizing evil—the needless and wicked destruction of life upon our thoroughfares.

When I stand by this scene of devastation, at Burlington, and see nearly one hundred of my fellow-creatures dragged out of the ruins of a railway train, mangled or already dead; when I enter a neighboring house and see prostrate there the noble form of a friend, lately radiant with manly beauty,

and embellished with the graces which win their way at once to every heart, now mutilated, agonizing, dying; when I turn from the harrowing spectacle, and enter the mansion of another friend, and find him bemoaning with fruitless tears, the prop which sustained, and the light which cheered him, in his old age; when I pass from one dwelling to another, and find, in different cities and villages, scores of families bowed down with a deep and bitter sorrow; when I do this, and ask, "*Wherefore* is all this suffering, and sadness, and death?" If the answer be, "God has done it!" my lips are sealed. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" But when the answer comes back to me, as it may with perfect truth, in respect to this same series of events, "*Man* has done it!" then I know of no principle of religion, nor of any obligation of citizenship, which binds me passively to acquiesce in it, and to say, "It is well!"

In the case actually before us, I certainly cannot say, "It is well." In so far as man's agency is concerned, there is very much in it to censure. It is this consideration which must make it so difficult for these bereaved households to feel resigned to their affliction. In ordinary cases, when our friends die, we have the consolation of knowing that it could not have been prevented. If they were removed by disease, it was after everything practicable had been done to restore them. If by a storm at sea, how could they withstand the elements? If by an accident, no blame-worthiness, perhaps, could attach either to themselves or others. But there is no such comfort here. This disaster might, and should have been avoided. It was a perfectly gratuitous and unnecessary sacrifice of life, a holocaust to improvidence, recklessness, and cupidity.

The ultimate responsibility of it rests with the State of New Jersey, which has sold the exclusive right of carrying passengers by railroad, between the two great cities of the Union, without requiring of the other party to the compact, any sufficient provision for the *safety* of their passengers. The responsibility of the "*Company*" has been settled by the



public voice, with a unanimity and a solemnity not likely to be disturbed by any future discussions. Nearly all the serious disasters on this road have been occasioned by the want of a *double track*. The demand for this further accommodation is as reasonable as it is urgent. It is sealed with the blood of numerous victims. Why is it not conceded, or else the door thrown open to other parties who will give us and our families this indispensable protection in passing over this great avenue of travel? Must we wait for it until the proprietors have covered the State with a *network of tributary roads*? Have not lives enough been immolated to this Moloch? Are families and churches to be shrouded in mourning every few months, because a corporation, to whose custody we are all *compelled* to intrust ourselves whenever we visit the Northern States, prefers its own gains to our safety?

No one pretends that the construction of a second track would preclude all accidents. But, on the other hand, no one has yet been imbecile enough to deny that it would very largely abridge the liability to disaster. The mercenary policy which refuses so needful a safeguard on this national thoroughfare, is disreputable to the commonwealth which tolerates it, and unjust to the citizens of other States, who are obliged to traverse her territory.

The *animus* which pervades the entire administration of this opulent and powerful monopoly, may be seen with noon-day clearness in the official "REPORT" of the Directors of the Company, on the recent accident. The gentlemen whose names are appended to this paper, are, several of them, my personal acquaintances—I hope I may say, my personal friends; and they are, as a body, known in society as high-minded and honorable men—exemplary, not only as citizens, but as husbands and fathers. And yet these gentlemen have affixed their signatures to as heartless a document as ever emanated even from a railroad corporation. One of their trains has killed twenty-four persons, and wounded some sixty or seventy others. And while hundreds, perhaps

thousands of hearts are still bleeding under the anguish of this terrible slaughter, they put forth a paper, in which they not only undertake to vindicate the every act of every one of their officials concerned in this tragedy, but scrupulously abstain from the use of any phrase or syllable which might be interpreted into an expression of sorrow for the dead, or of sympathy for the mourners! Even allowing, what few have denied, that a culpable degree of carelessness attached to the driver of the *carriage*, this is no justification of what one of the Philadelphia papers\* properly described as the "haughty, and defiant," and unfeeling tone of this report. It supplies another illustration of the sinister effect produced upon men by consolidating them in a society or corporation. Many a corporation has done things which its members would no more have done as individuals, than they would have turned highwaymen. It might be well for such persons to consider, in some leisure moment, how the moral responsibility of these transactions is to be apportioned *hereafter*, as between the individual and the corporator.

In their anxiety to shun all concessions which might be used against them in a judicial process, the framers of this report have lapsed into some very unguarded statements as to matters of fact. A specimen or two will suffice.

They allege that, just before the train started from Camden, their agent examined the bell-rope, and "found it right." Henry Sherwood, a switch-tender, in their employ, testifies that one of the brake-men told him that, seeing some cows on the road as they were backing, he wished to ring the bell, but "*the bell-rope was not long enough* to reach over to where he was standing, on the rear platform of the hind car." He "started to go front, and, before he got back, the horses were struck."

Again, the report says: "It does appear to your committee, that in all particulars, the *law of the State*, and the regulations of the Company, were fully complied with by these agents

\* The Pennsylvania Inquirer.

and employees having charge of the trains on the 29th of August. The coroner's jury, it is true, say that the engineer did not observe the rules and the law respecting blowing the whistle. But they must have rejected the testimony of the following witnesses." (Here follow the names of fourteen persons.) The law of New Jersey, bearing on this point, is in the following words:—

—"And such bell shall be *kept ringing*, or such steam-whistle shall *continue to be blown*, until the engine *has crossed* such turnpike or highway, or has stopped."

I have re-examined the testimony of twelve of these fourteen witnesses (that of the two others is not within my reach), and there is NOT ONE of them, from the engineer down, who testifies that the whistle was blown *continuously* until the train reached the crossing. Several of them, on the contrary, on being asked this question, categorically, testified that *it was not*. Various other witnesses, who were on the train, or in the adjacent fields, bear the same testimony. A single witness among the "fourteen," it is true, does state that the collision occurred "immediately after" he heard the whistle; but, on being asked subsequently: "How long after you heard the whistle did the collision take place?" he replied: "I cannot exactly state; it was a very short time, however; it *was not many minutes*."

These two instances may illustrate the real value of this report. It is as unfortunate in its history and logic as it is revolting in its frigid, legal impassibility. By indorsing all the acts of all their agents concerned in the disaster, the Directors virtually assume their responsibilities, and shut out the collateral issues, which might otherwise have been raised as between injured parties and their subordinates. With the judicial bearings of this wholesale justification of their servants, I am not concerned. But there is one statement made by them, of too grave an import to be passed over.

It deserves especial notice, then, that they express their approval of the "speed" of the train, as "*usual and lawful*." That this speed was, as they assert, "about fifteen miles an

hour," will be credited by few persons who read the testimony before the coroner's jury, and note the involuntary exclamations of Mr. Gillespie and other passengers, at the moment of the collision; and by still fewer who *look at the results*. On this point, the hint thrown out by Mr. Wolcott, the intelligent Road-Master on the "Great Western Railroad of Illinois," who was one of the passengers, is very significant:—

"I had an impression about the speed; but THE RESULT *will determine the speed.*"

What was the "result"? Several large cars so crushed and shivered into fragments, that a bystander declared, that "except the roofs of the broken cars, there was no part of them so large *that he could not have carried it off on his shoulder.*" Now, it is of no special moment to decide whether the speed was, as the Directors say, fifteen, or, as the engineer of the New York train testifies, "about twenty," or, as the public seem to believe, thirty miles an hour. A retrograde train, let it be remembered, with its couplings loose, no attachment in the rear to remove obstructions, and, if thrown from the track (which it may be, even by a pebble), the weight and force of the engine applied, as on the late occasion, to drive the cars *upon* and *through* one another—such a train is well-nigh helpless—as the passengers individually are, from their reversed position, in case of accident. Yet, the Directors of this Company have deliberately announced to the world, what it behooves every one proposing to travel on their roads to understand, that "it is USUAL and LAWFUL" for their engineers to back trains in this defenceless condition, at a *rate* which, in the event of a collision, *may grind the cars into kindling wood!*

This is their scale of prudence; and this their estimate of the responsibility which attaches to them, as the carriers of some hundreds of thousands of valuable lives annually!

Is it not horrible that we should be obliged to confide ourselves, and our wives and children, to such a guardianship as this? Can nothing be done to effect a change? Are the *people* of New Jersey so powerless, so regardless of the duties

they owe to the citizens of the other States, or so wanting, even in common humanity, that they will neither require the existing Company to construct a safe road across their soil, nor permit any one else to do it?

But I forbear. Again and again, GOD has spoken by His providence on this subject, with a solemnity and a pathos sufficient, it might seem, to reach every heart. If this last and most fearful utterance is not heeded, we may well despair of seeing these great evils redressed.







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